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Letter dated 27 December 2013 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Paraguay to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the honour to address you regarding the candidature of the Republic of Paraguay for membership in the Human Rights Council for the term 2015-2017, at the elections to be held in 2014.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006, please find attached a statement of the pledges and voluntary commitments of the Republic of Paraguay (see annex).

It would be highly appreciated if the present letter and its annex were circulated as a document of the General Assembly.

(*Signed*) Marcelo **Scappini**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

* A/69/50.

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Annex to the letter dated 27 December 2013 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of Paraguay to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

[Original: Spanish]

Candidature of Paraguay to the United Nations Human Rights Council for the 2015-2017 period

Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251

1. Convinced that the protection and exercise of human rights is the foundation of an effective democracy, in particular when all vulnerable groups are included, the Government of Paraguay has continuously stepped up its efforts to institutionalize human rights in the country. Paraguay's candidature to the Human Rights Council for the 2015-2017 period is the outcome of this process.

2. The Republic of Paraguay was a member of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights during the 2003-2005 period. In this connection, convinced that it would contribute to the Human Rights Council in a constructive and inclusive manner, for the first time in the country's history, the Government of Paraguay is seeking membership of the Council, for the 2015-2017 period.

3. Paraguay is a State party to the major regional and international instruments on the protection of human rights.[1] The Government therefore recognizes the competence of and cooperates with the various treaty monitoring bodies; it regularly submits reports to them concerning the human rights situation in the country and follows up on their recommendations. Indeed, Paraguay has honoured all of its commitments to the treaty bodies.

4. Since the advent of democracy in 1989, Paraguay's participation in and collaboration with the inter-American system bodies — the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights — has been harmonious and productive, which has led to important progress towards fulfilment of the commitments undertaken by the State as a party to the American Convention on Human Rights (Pact of San José, Costa Rica). Paraguay has also actively supported the process of strengthening the inter-American human rights system.

[1] The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional Protocols thereto; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Optional Protocol thereto; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Optional Protocol thereto; the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocols thereto; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol thereto; the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance; the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide; the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid; the Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity.

5. Another priority of the Government has been to integrate a significant number of ratified instruments and international laws into the national legal order. In this connection, it has repealed several laws that run contrary to international human rights law and promoted legislative reforms with a view to achieving full harmonization.

6. Paraguay's commitment to human rights is also evident in its cooperation with the special procedures mandate holders. Since 2003, the Government has extended an open invitation to the special procedures mandate holders of the Human Rights Council, arranged a number of visits and developed an ongoing relationship with those mechanisms.

7. Paraguay is also committed to strengthening the universal periodic review mechanism. In addition to promoting a broad-based and participatory preparatory process within the country, the Government has accepted all of the recommendations that it received during the first cycle and has developed a follow-up system in order to identify challenges and thus improve the standards for protection of human rights.

8. A significant number of ministries and State institutions, as well as non-governmental entities, have a department, office or unit dedicated to human rights issues; this facilitates coordination among the various institutions to ensure that human rights are institutionalized and that public policy meets high standards for the protection of human rights. An example of such coordination is the establishment of the Human Rights Network of the Executive Branch and the drafting of the first national human rights plan, approved in 2013, which sets out a series of short-, medium- and long-term commitments that serve as the road map for the promotion and protection of human rights.

9. At the judicial level, for its part, the Supreme Court of Justice, in the framework of its commitment to promoting and defending human rights, has proposed to mainstream human rights concerns into all of its administration of justice activities. This commitment is expressed through concrete measures, such as the creation of the Museum of Justice and the Human Rights Records and Archives Centre in 1993. The 2011-2015 strategic plan of the Supreme Court of Justice was structured around the use of human rights and gender perspectives as a strategic analysis tool that would guide the process of adopting human rights indicators on the right to a fair trial. The plan also reiterates the Government of Paraguay's support for the 100 Brasilia Regulations Regarding Access to Justice for Vulnerable People.

10. The Government of Paraguay considers the goal of poverty reduction to be a national priority and is firmly committed to effectively addressing the issue of extreme poverty. In this regard, it is implementing the national poverty reduction programme, called "Sowing Opportunities", which aims to increase the income of families living in extreme poverty and enhance their access to social services.

11. Public policies on quality of life and equitable health care have been advanced with a view to improving people's quality of life by reducing and eliminating health inequities in line with the principles of universality, equality, comprehensiveness and social participation. The policies are implemented by family health units, which provide primary health care services and have reached a significant number of people in all regions of the country.

12. Paraguay promotes the protection of civil and political rights, in particular basic rights such as the right to life, the right to physical integrity and the right to liberty. Clear examples of Paraguay's dedication in this area include the human rights training course based on international standards offered to members of the national police; the strengthening of investigative mechanisms of the specialized human rights units of the Public Prosecution Service; and the establishment of the national mechanism on the prevention of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

13. Regarding efforts to counter human trafficking, Paraguay has an Inter-institutional Committee on Measures to Prevent and Counter Trafficking in Persons, made up of State institutions and civil society organizations; there is also a national policy to prevent and counter human trafficking, in addition to the Comprehensive Act against Human Trafficking of Paraguay, promulgated on 13 December 2012.

14. With respect to the protection of children and adolescents, the Government of Paraguay is investing heavily in strengthening the National System for the Protection and Comprehensive Promotion of the Rights of Children in order to achieve better and more effective coordination among its member entities. Furthermore, the Government is strengthening successful programmes on the protection and promotion of children's rights, such as the Abrazo Programme and the Assistance Programme for Street Children and Adolescents (PAINAC).

15. **With a view to contributing its vision to the human rights promotion and protection mechanisms of the Human Rights Council, Paraguay commits to the following:**

At the national level:

- Promote the implementation of the national human rights plan, with the participation of civil society, academia, and other relevant stakeholders;
- Strengthen and ensure the proper functioning of and coordination among the existing human rights mechanisms: the Human Rights Network of the Executive Branch, the commission responsible for carrying out international recommendations and rulings, and the national mechanism for the prevention of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; in addition, facilitate meetings with civil society in order to develop opportunities for dialogue and the exchange of experiences in the promotion and protection of human rights;
- Continue efforts to draft human rights indicators, to be added to existing indicators on health, education and the right to a fair trial;
- Promote the effective implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (Convention No. 169) of the International Labour Organization (ILO);
- Strengthen public policies that have a bearing on vulnerable groups: indigenous peoples, women, children and adolescents, trafficking victims, persons with disabilities, migrants and older persons, among others;

– Promote actions to fight impunity and support remembrance, truth and justice, in line with the recommendations contained in the report of the Truth and Justice Commission of 2008; also strengthen the existing mechanisms on reparations, such as the national team that investigates, searches for and fully identifies persons who were detained, disappeared or were victims of extra judicial executions during the 1954-1989 period, and the Inter-institutional Commission for the Establishment and Operation of the Network of Sites of History and Conscience;

At the regional level:

– Continue to support the work of the inter-American system bodies: the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights;

– Promote the implementation of the recommendations, friendly settlement agreements and rulings of the human rights protection bodies of the inter-American human rights system;

– Actively support the discussions on strengthening the inter-American human rights system;

– Promote new discussions on human rights issues at regional forums;

– Enhance cooperation and technical assistance among countries in the region in order to strengthen human rights-related actions;

At the international level:

– Foster the concept that human rights are universal, indivisible, inalienable, interdependent and mutually reinforcing;

– Promote universal accession to the major human rights treaties;

– Cooperate fully with the activities of the Human Rights Council, its bodies, procedures and special mechanisms on the promotion and protection human rights;

– Support the strengthening of international cooperation as a tool that facilitates the effective implementation of human rights;

– Protect the independence of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights;

– Promote the strengthening of the universal periodic review mechanism;

– Submit a midterm follow-up report on the recommendations resulting from the universal periodic review and a national report, within the allotted time period;

– At the national level, implement an effective mechanism to monitor and oversee international recommendations and share experiences with interested States;

– Encourage openness and honest dialogue with the special mechanisms and procedures of the United Nations Human Rights Council and maintain an open and continuous invitation for them to visit the country.